

Telegraph Herald

By Karina Schroeder

U.S. Rep. Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, visited Dubuque on Monday morning to discuss tax incentives and rebates for energy-efficient consumer choices.

Braley spoke with reporters at Lowe's Home Improvement in Dubuque, then toured Sivy Steel Foundry in Bettendorf.

At Lowe's, Braley discussed his push to pass the HomeStar Energy Retrofit Act, which builds on energy-efficiency

rebate programs in the Recovery Act. The bill passed the House and is awaiting deliberation in the Senate.

This bill would allow people to "make informed choices that are going to save them money, save energy costs and put people to work with American-made goods," Braley said.

The bill is described as a two-track program, which Braley said has short- and long-term benefits. Through the act's Silver Star program, consumers would receive up-front rebates for the installation of certain energy-efficient products such as insulation, duct sealing, light bulbs and water heaters.

Through the Gold Star program, consumers are rewarded for conducting comprehensive energy audits of their home and following through on energy-efficiency recommendations.

"Not only are you saving up-front costs on these appliances, in the form of a rebate, but long-term savings on the cost of the energy you're consuming," Braley said.

Braley said the HomeStar bill would allow 3 million families to retrofit their homes to be more energy-efficient, save consumers \$9.2 billion over 10 years and create 168,000 jobs in the United States.

With Energy Star logos already on many products, consumers can see what energy-efficient options are available through local stores.

"We think this is the ideal time as we get headed into fall, for people to start thinking about energy-efficiency decisions," Braley said. "Stores are doing a lot to make consumers aware of how they can find the best deal."

Braley said Energy Star products are available in many stores, not just home improvement stores. He hopes to see the Senate pass the HomeStar bill during the fall session.